



# How Abraham Lincoln Became President



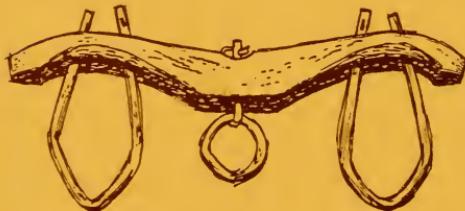
By J. McCan Davis

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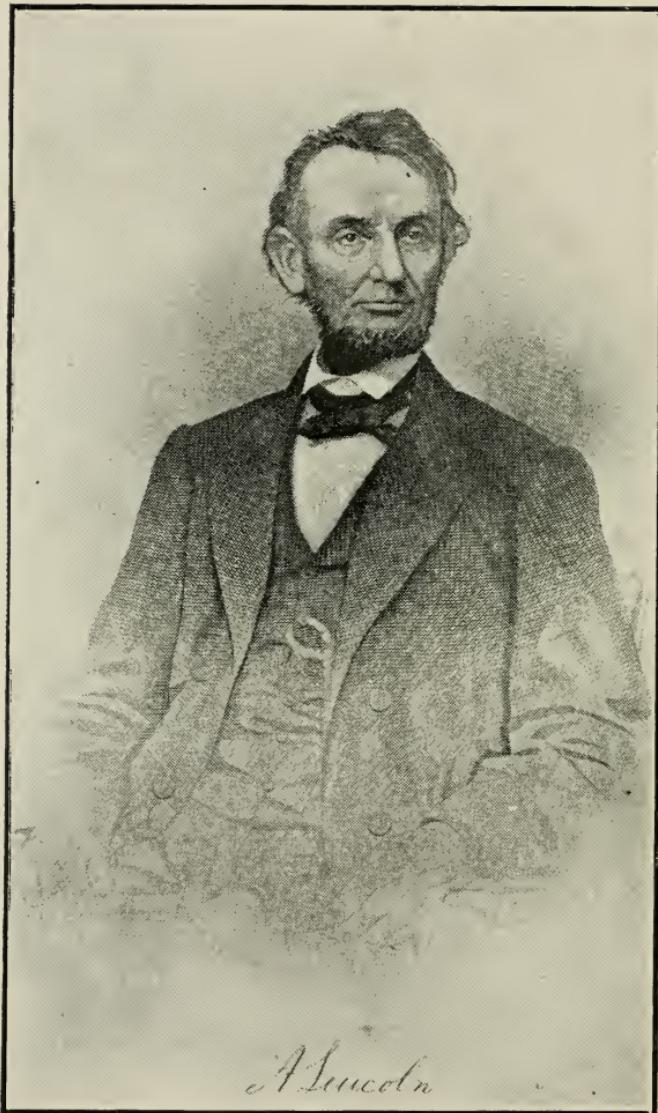






How  
Abraham Lincoln  
Became President

Centennial Edition



ABRAHAM LINCOLN AS PRESIDENT.

From an old steel engraving, after a photograph by Brady.

# How Abraham Lincoln Became President

By J. McCAN DAVIS

Author of "The Breaking of the Deadlock," "Abraham Lincoln :  
His Book," etc.

Centennial Edition

THE ILLINOIS COMPANY  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS  
1909

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J. McCan Davis

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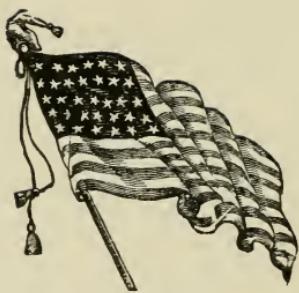
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Penn. Div.

To the Soldiers of the Civil War,  
Comrades of My Father,  
the heroic men who offered their lives that  
“government of the people, by the people, for the people  
shall not perish from the earth.”







J. McCormick Davis

## Foreword.

Abraham Lincoln was in no sense an accident. His nomination for President in 1860 surprised the country. Yet it was the logical result of a series of events that had extended over a period of many years. This was not wholly clear then, but it is plain enough now. It is the purpose of this little volume to tell briefly the story of his preparation for his colossal task and of the events that made him, almost inevitably, as it now seems, Chief Magistrate of the nation.

There have been many great men in the world, and the future will bring forth more great men. But the world has produced only one Abraham Lincoln, and we may not expect another in all the generations yet unborn. The product of an age, he belongs to all ages.

J. McC. D.

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS,

October 24, 1908.

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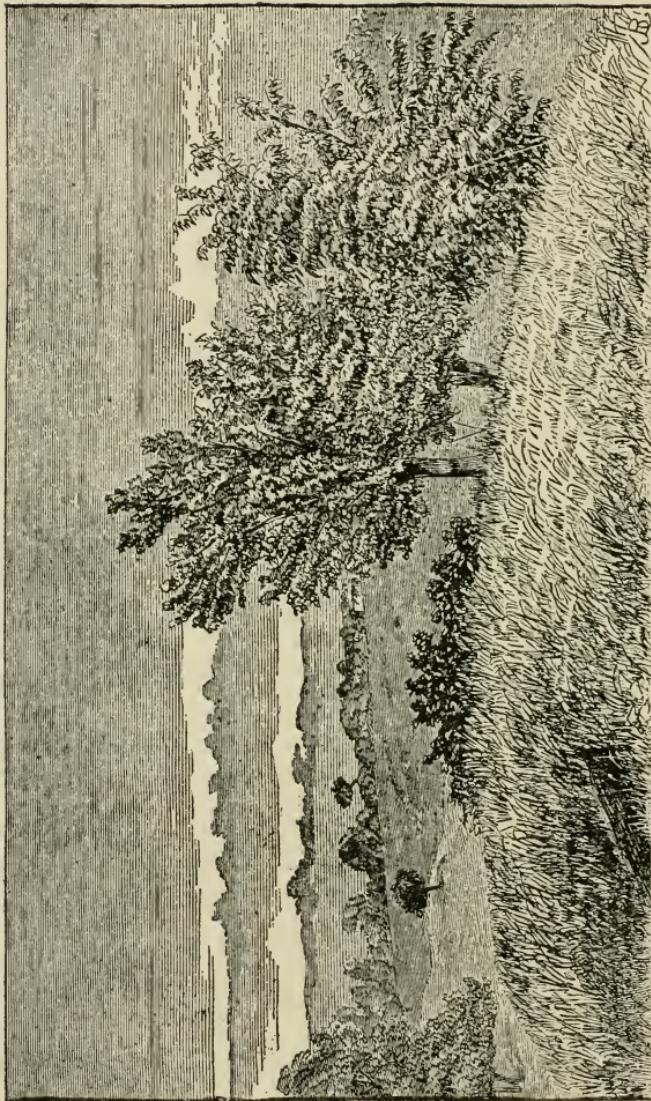
## A TRIBUTE.

Abraham Lincoln was not a deity. It is among the glories of the human race that he was a man. He stands on a pinnacle alone, the greatest man in our history — the most wondrous man of all the ages. The world will forever marvel at his origin and his career. Whence came this wondrous man? Back of Lincoln — generations before he was born — events happened which helped to shape and mold his destiny. No man escapes this inheritance from the past. We can not know what seeds were sown a thousand years ago. We can not see far beyond the log cabin in the wilderness of Kentucky. He came to us with no heritage save the heart and the brain which came from the fathomless deeps of the unknown.

He was endowed with that divine gift of imagination which enabled him to behold the future. The emancipation proclamation loomed in his mind when, as an unknown, friendless youth, he stood on the levee in New Orleans and saw a slave auction thirty years before the Civil War. As he sat in the White House he saw beyond battles, beyond the end of the war, beyond the restoration of peace, a reunited country — the grandest nation on the globe, under a single and triumphant flag, moving down the centuries to its glorious destiny.

—*From the oration on "The Two Giants of Illinois," by J. McCann Davis.*





SITE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S BIRTHPLACE.

From an old engraving. "The house stood in front of the pear trees, which were planted by his father."

## CHAPTER I.

### THE DREAMS OF A BOY IN THE WILDERNESS.

It is quite possible that Abraham Lincoln, a little boy in Kentucky, dreamed that some day he would be President of the United States. Such has been the dream of many another American boy, inspired by the hopeful encouragement of a fond mother. But the chances are that the mind of Abraham Lincoln, the boy, did not soar so far away as the White House in Washington.

When Abraham Lincoln was born (February 12, 1809), this nation was yet very young. A great many things were to be demonstrated. The Declaration of Independence, whose author was still living, was the most vital thing of the time, proclaiming this the land of equality and opportunity. Yet not many had, as very many came to have in later years, the magnificent conception of the limitless possibilities that lie before every American youth.

The new republic had chosen its best and its greatest men to fill the high office of President. But none had been what the world has since come to call a "self-made man." Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison — all had been of gentle birth, all had been respectably educated in the way decreed by the custom of the time.

Although it was the shibboleth of the new republic that "all men are created equal," it was yet to be shown

that a boy born of the humblest parentage, in poverty and obscurity, without educational advantages, could rise, by the sheer force of his own efforts, to the most exalted office in the land.

Little Abraham, son of Thomas and Nancy Lincoln, in the wilderness of Kentucky, found little in his surroundings to suggest great things. He learned in time, from the pioneer schoolmaster and from a few books that he came upon by chance, certain facts about the nation's history and some stories of its great men. Later, still a boy, but transplanted to another wilderness in another State, he got possession of Weems' "Life of Washington," the most popular biographical work of that day. Washington, "father of his country," loomed as the greatest figure in American history, and young Abraham found in the character portrayed in this book an ideal that persisted to the end of his life.

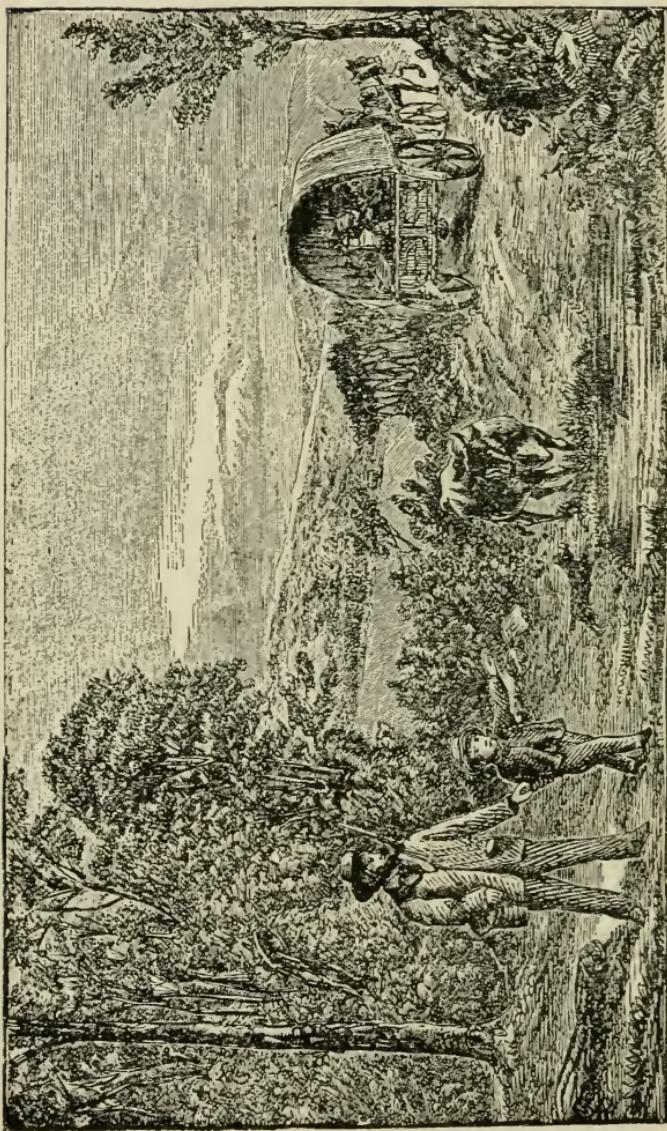
George Washington! We can hardly suppose that Abraham, reading his book by the flaring light of a fireplace in a log cabin, had any thought that he could ever be as great or as world-famous as this wondrous man. George Washington was so exalted a character — he seemed to tower so high above common man — as to be utterly beyond the ambition, beyond the imagination, of this boy of the frontier.

Yet a strange ambition very soon set the youthful mind aflame. It was the ambition to rise above his sordid environment — to "get up higher." Not many books were within his reach, but he read them all — and then read them again. Thus he acquired something that became a distinguishing characteristic — the gift of

thoroughness — that was predominant throughout his life. He learned to master every attempted task. Let him investigate something, he would go to the bottom; he would not leave it until he knew all about it. This was the great secret of his self-education — the one great fact that transplanted the university to the fireside of a log cabin in a far-off wilderness.

"The short and simple annals of the poor" is Lincoln's own description of his youthful career. His birth in Kentucky, amid the humble surroundings common to a pioneer community — his single year of instruction under the pioneer schoolmaster — his bitter struggle with poverty, beginning at his birth and continuing into the years of manhood — is a story familiar to every schoolboy. As Lincoln emerged from boyhood, he heard of a man for whom he conceived a high admiration. The man was Henry Clay of Kentucky. He had been a member of Congress for many years; he had achieved fame as an orator, and he was rapidly becoming the idol of a large part of the American people.

Henry Clay became the ideal statesman in the mind of Abraham Lincoln, even before he had left the rude hut which was the home of Thomas Lincoln and his little family in Indiana. The first year of young Lincoln in Illinois was passed in Macon county, not far from Decatur. Here he helped "clear" a small farm in the Sangamon bottom, and made the rails that were destined to achieve renown and to become no small factor in carrying Lincoln far beyond his most extravagant dreams of place and power.



“THE EMIGRATION FROM KENTUCKY.”

From an old engraving.

## CHAPTER II.

### FOUNDATION OF GREATNESS LAID IN A FRONTIER VILLAGE.

The ensuing six years were extremely important ones for Abraham Lincoln. They were the year (1831-1837) which he spent in the pioneer village of New Salem. This was one of the little towns that had sprung up along the Sangamon river and whose inhabitants had some ambitious hopes with respect to the future. The atmosphere of New Salem was not much different from that in which Lincoln had passed all of his earlier years. Its inhabitants were pioneer men and women of rough exterior, but of kind, generous, honest impulses. There were not many counterfeits among them. They were genuine men and women. In this atmosphere — amid this free, unselfish life — here where men met upon one common level — here where there were no classes, no aristocracy — only men, whose strongest tie binding them together was the brotherhood of man — Abraham Lincoln completed the foundation of his great character and his marvelous career.

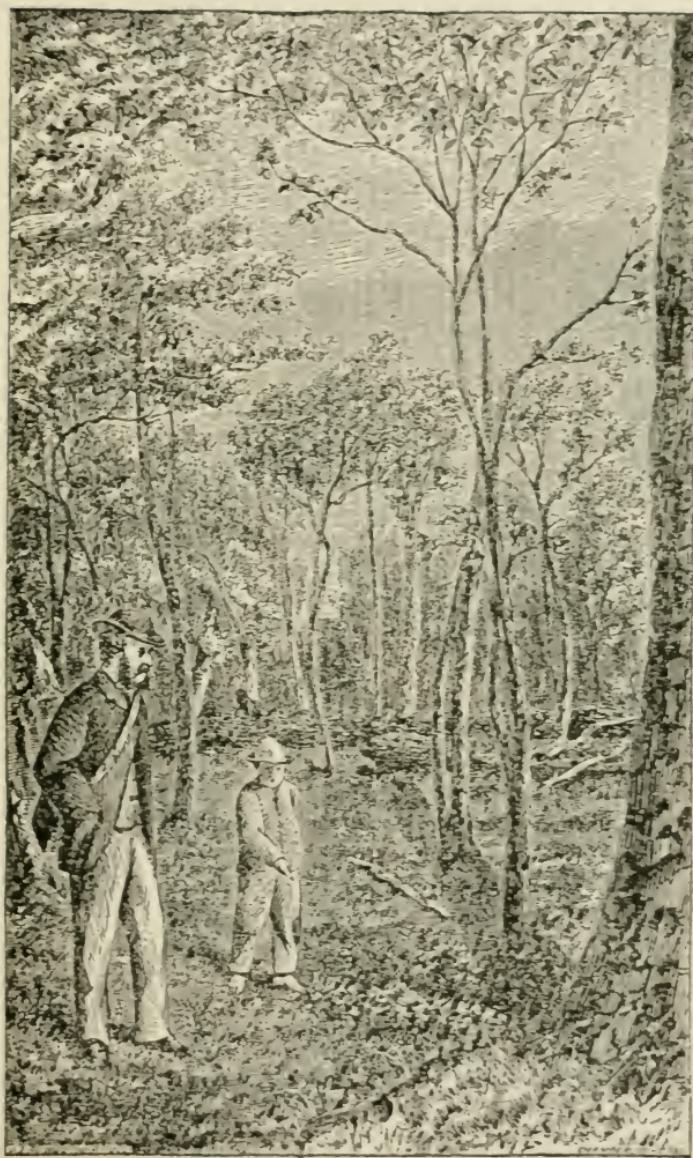
It was at this crude frontier village that Lincoln's ambition began to expand. He had first entered the village early in 1831 as a flat-boat man on his way to New Orleans. When he returned a few months later he had had his first glimpse of the world; and in the far-off Southern city he had gotten his first clear notion of the enormity of

## 22 How Abraham Lincoln Became President.

human slavery; for he had witnessed a slave auction — and there were planted the seeds of the emancipation proclamation. “If I ever get a chance to hit that thing,” he said, as he looked on in horror, “by the eternal, I’ll hit it hard.”

Within a few months after settling at New Salem Lincoln became a candidate for the Legislature. Then, before the election came around, he became a soldier in the Black Hawk War. His first venture in politics proved a failure, for he was defeated as a legislative candidate; but two years later (in 1834) he sought the same office again, and this time was successful. Meanwhile he had become a store-keeper and the village postmaster. He took up surveying and found a great demand for his professional services. He read law — an ambition formed, no doubt, some years before, when he had read the revised statutes of Indiana — and was duly licensed as a lawyer. He was still a member of the legislature when he put his personal belongings in a pair of saddle-bags and rode a borrowed horse to Springfield, which henceforth was his place of residence.

Lincoln’s years at New Salem were years of progress, of climbing, of looking upward and onward. Gradually his self-confidence developed; he found that he could do things — that he could inspire his neighbors with confidence in him — that, in short, there were many possibilities for him in the future.



GRAVE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S MOTHER IN 1860.

From an old engraving.

## CHAPTER III.

AN EARLY PROPHECY — “WOULDN’T BE SURPRISED IF ABE LINCOLN GOT TO BE GOVERNOR SOME DAY.”

Although Lincoln lived precisely the life of those around him — joining in the rough-and-tumble sports of the Clary’s Grove boys, and being, so far as external appearances gave any clue, only a tall, awkward product of the frontier — his extraordinary ability was not without recognition on the part of his neighbors. He was obviously and undeniably superior to most of them in mental equipment. They came to him to have him write their deeds and their legal papers. He was frequently consulted on questions of law. The people were not long in discovering that the flat-boat man, store-keeper, postmaster, surveyor and legislator was rapidly towering above them.

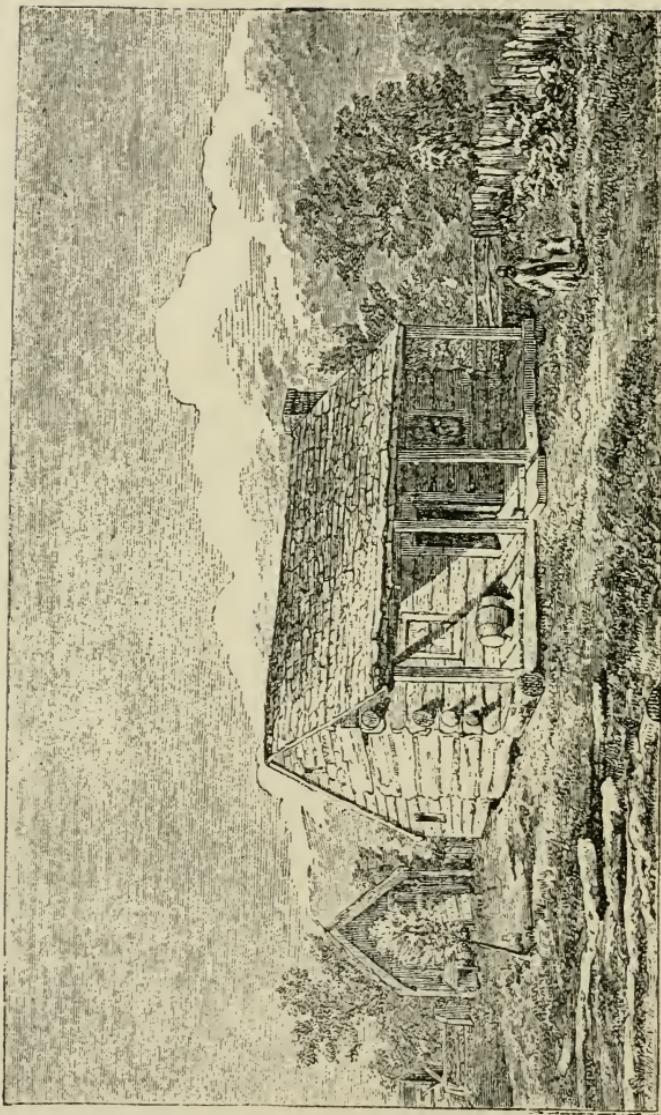
No doubt Lincoln had ambitions that carried him far beyond the confines of New Salem. Perhaps he expected some day to go to Congress. He had long since made the discovery that Congressmen, and even United States Senators, were, after all, only “common clay,” and that even these high positions were not to be considered unattainable.

There were men in New Salem shrewd enough to perceive something of Lincoln’s possibilities. “Often,” testifies one of the surviving inhabitants of New Salem,

"I have heard my brother-in-law, Dr. Duncan, say he would not be surprised if Abe Lincoln got to be governor of Illinois." (Statement of Daniel Greene Burner, Berry and Lincoln's grocery clerk, to the author in 1895.) Yet Dr. Duncan was probably far ahead of the other residents of New Salem as a prophet respecting Lincoln; for not many of them were able to perceive the attributes of a governor of Illinois in the tall, awkward surveyor who went about locating corner-stones, or the perambulating postmaster who went about delivering letters from the ample interior of his hat.

His candor and honesty are shown clearly in his first appeal for public office. When he became a candidate for the Legislature, in 1832, he distributed a handbill which set forth his "platform." He concluded:

"Every man is said to have his peculiar ambition. Whether that be true or not, I can say, for one, that I have no other so great as that of being truly esteemed by my fellow men by rendering myself worthy of their esteem. How far I shall succeed in gratifying this ambition is yet to be developed. I am young and unknown to many of you. I was born, and have ever remained, in the most humble walks of life. I have no wealthy or popular relatives or friends to recommend me. My case is thrown exclusively upon the independent voters of the county; and, if elected, they will have conferred a favor upon me for which I shall be unremitting in my labors to compensate. But, if the good people in their wisdom shall see fit to keep me in the background, I have been too familiar with disappointments to be very much chagrined."



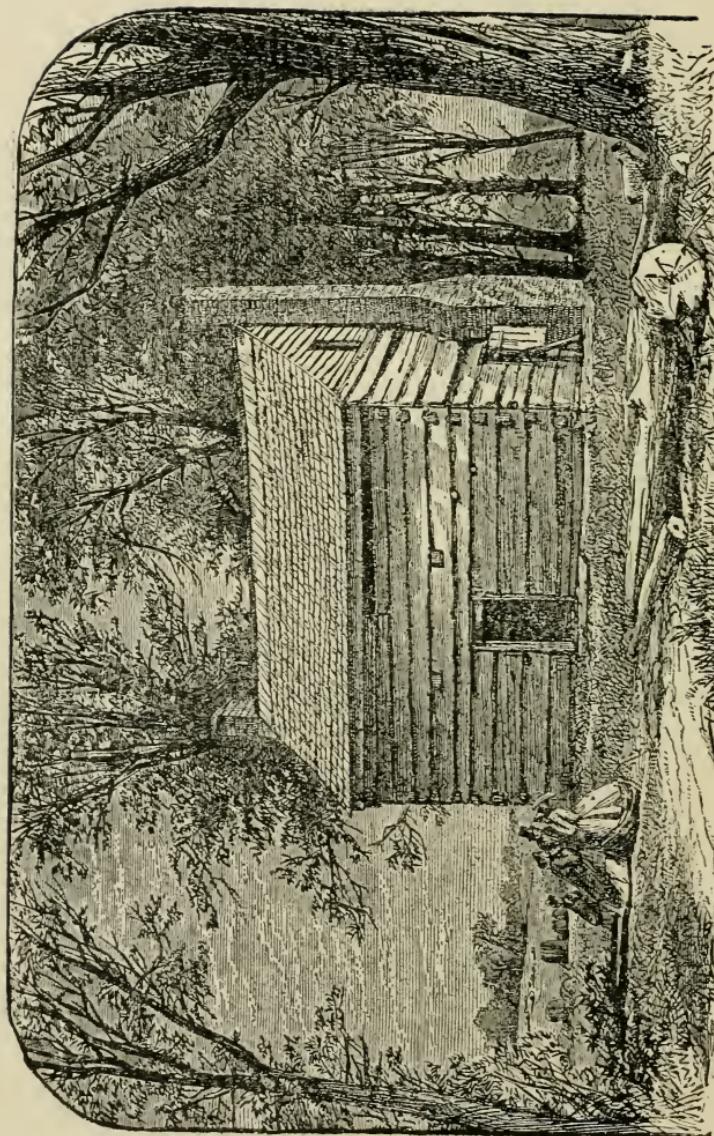
THE LINCOLN CABIN NEAR GENTRYVILLE, INDIANA.  
From an old engraving. "The home of Lincoln for thirteen years and where his mother died."

## CHAPTER . IV.

IN CONGRESS — DISAPPOINTED — QUILTS POLITICS — FINDS  
CONTENTMENT “ ON THE CIRCUIT.”

Lincoln's admiration for Henry Clay carried him naturally into the Whig party. Although elected to the Legislature on local issues, he was an outspoken Whig; and it was as a Whig that he sought election to Congress, an ambition in which he was finally successful. Lincoln's career in Congress, covering only one term, has been frequently pronounced a “ failure.” And so it was, from the viewpoint of achievement in Congress, as well as with respect to popularity at home. But the fault was chargeable less to Lincoln than to his party. Lincoln's service in Congress came during the Mexican War, and the Whig party was on the unpopular side; it had opposed the war in the belief that it was being waged in the interest of the slave power. At the end of his term the Springfield district sent a new Congressman to Washington. Lincoln asked for a federal appointment; he wanted to be Commissioner of the General Land Office; but he failed to get the office. He was offered an appointment as Governor of Oregon Territory; but he declined to accept it, and he came home, chagrined and dejected, resolved to quit politics forever.

After 1849 Lincoln's retirement from politics was complete. In 1850 Congress enacted the famous “ com-



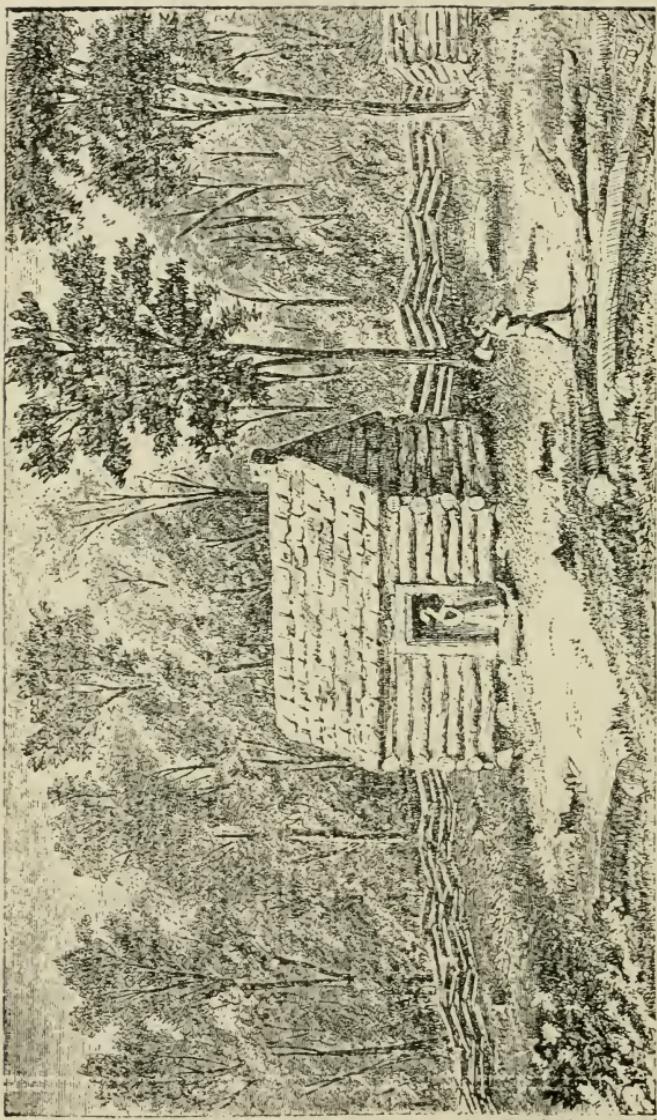
LITTLE PIGEON BAPTIST CHURCH, SPENCER COUNTY, INDIANA.

From an old engraving. This was the rude place of worship in the neighborhood of the Lincoln family in Indiana. Here Abraham is said to have heard expounded the orthodox gospel of the frontier.

promise," a series of measures designed to settle the conflict between the North and the South with respect to slavery. Thus was removed apparently the only vital issue that remained to divide political parties. True, there were a good many "issues," but they were comparatively unimportant; the party organizations were held together mainly by those who cared everything for office, but much less for political principles.

For a half dozen years Lincoln practiced his profession assiduously. He followed the custom of the day and on horseback, in company with other lawyers, traveled from county to county, trying cases before the judges who generally traveled with the lawyers. Lincoln by degrees became one of the leading lawyers of his time in Illinois. There were other lawyers whose fees were larger, but it may well be doubted if, in point of ability and of success at the bar, Lincoln had any superior among his professional contemporaries.

These were years of comparative contentment for Lincoln. Year by year he saw his professional prestige and his professional income increasing. It was a most congenial life, this old-fashioned "riding the circuit"; for it threw him in the company of the most brilliant, accomplished and agreeable men of the time. As a circuit-riding lawyer, Lincoln not only acquired his unrivaled reputation as a story-teller, but he completed his preparation for the great things he was soon to do — for the great career which was now about to open, but of which he knew absolutely nothing.



THE LINCOLN HOME IN THE SANGAMON BOTTOM, NEAR DECATUR, ILLINOIS, IN 1830.  
From an old engraving.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE AWAKENING — “ BACK INTO POLITICS ” — A NEW PARTY — LINCOLN ITS REAL LEADER.

The year 1854 marked the reentry of Abraham Lincoln into political life. It was the year of his awakening from the peaceful life on the circuit. Stephen A. Douglas, then United States Senator from Illinois — a man who had rapidly risen to the leadership of his party in the United States Senate and who was popularly regarded as the nation's foremost statesman — forced through Congress the measure that became known as the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. This bill in effect repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had prohibited slavery in the unorganized territory north of  $36^{\circ} 30'$ , and gave the people of a territory, prior to the formation of a State government, the right to determine for themselves whether or not they should have slavery. This was the doctrine of “ popular sovereignty,” thenceforward linked inseparably with the name of Stephen A. Douglas.

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill necessarily reopened the slavery question, for it made it possible to form several slave States from the new territory in the Northwest. The storm of opposition which swept over the North aroused Lincoln. He put aside his law books and once more took up the discussion of political questions. Illinois became the storm center of the entire nation and

gradually a new figure emerged from the political chaos of the day. The strange form was the circuit-riding lawyer, the quaint story-teller, the skilled debater, Abraham Lincoln.

The year 1854 found the old parties rapidly going to pieces. The Whig party in truth was already dead. Its last presidential campaign was that of 1852; and although its leaders had made the customary prophecies of victory the party had been badly defeated. In Illinois the Whig State convention of 1852 had been a most perfunctory affair. An interesting and significant incident was the adoption of resolutions on the death of Henry Clay, whose life went out almost coincidently with that of the party with which his name had been so long identified. As for Lincoln there is no record or recollection that he was present at the Whig convention of 1852; his name does not appear in the list of delegates; for he was "out of politics."

But the year 1854 witnessed the breaking down of the old party lines. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill proved a severe blow to the Democratic party. In Illinois many men who had been prominent as Democratic leaders deserted the party and opposed the Kansas-Nebraska measure. The Whigs drifted aimlessly about. Very soon there was talk of a new party. But two years elapsed before the new party actually appeared in organized form.

In the meantime Lincoln, like many of his Whig associates, was a man without a party. He was slow — exceedingly slow — to break the old party ties. He kept away from a convention held in Springfield in 1854 for the purpose of organizing a new party — not that he was

necessarily out of sympathy with its object, but he was not yet fully prepared to admit that a new political party was necessary.

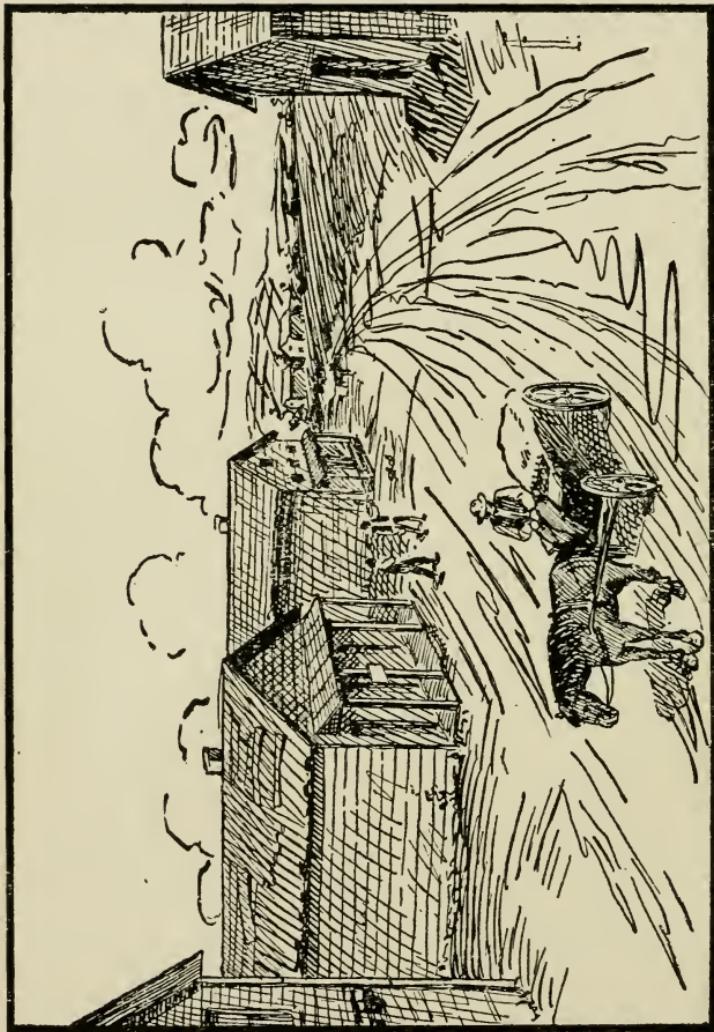
The events of the ensuing two years rapidly dissipated Lincoln's doubts as to the expediency of a new party. With the opening of the year 1856 Lincoln was eager to join in the new party movement. When a handful of editors met in Decatur February 22, 1856, he was there in consultation with them. There it was that the preliminary steps were taken for the organization of the Republican party of Illinois. Three months later (May 29), the first Republican State convention was held in Bloomington and there Lincoln made a wonderful speech which swayed the convention and which infused into the new party that spirit which solidified and held it together and made it ultimately triumphant.

From the beginning, Lincoln was the real leader of the Republican party in Illinois. Other men were the nominal leaders; other men were chairmen of committees and conventions; but the man whose influence was most powerful—the man whose intellect dominated the new party and whose ideas became its first principles—was Abraham Lincoln.

By 1855 Lincoln had achieved such standing as to make him a formidable candidate for United States Senator. He needed only a few votes to elect him; but he, an anti-Nebraska Whig, could not get these, and he gave way to Lyman Trumbull, an anti-Nebraska Democrat.

NEW SALEM.

From a drawing made expressly for this work, after an oil painting in the State House, Springfield, Ill. Mr. Lincoln lived in New Salem from 1831 to 1837; he was store-keeper, postmaster, surveyor and legislator. The village, located twenty miles northwest of Springfield, flourished for ten years, disappearing soon after Lincoln left it.



## CHAPTER VI.

### HIS FAME GROWS — “ LINCOLN FOR VICE-PRESIDENT ” — FOR PARTY HARMONY.

By 1856 the name of Abraham Lincoln was coming to be known in other States. Yet he did not regard himself, nor did his friends regard him, as in any sense a national figure. The Republican national convention was held at Philadelphia June 17 of that year, and no one was more surprised than Mr. Lincoln himself when the news came to Illinois that he had received 110 votes for Vice-President on the ticket that was to be headed by John C. Fremont. Lincoln was attending court at Urbana, and when a friend read to him from a Chicago newspaper the announcement of the ballot for Vice-President he said indifferently: “ I do not suppose the Lincoln referred to is myself.” Then he added, half facetiously: “ There is another great man of the name of Lincoln in Massachusetts.”

Lincoln was intensely active in the campaign of 1856. It is said that he made more than fifty speeches during the summer and autumn. The speeches were not of the short, flippant, catchly variety so common in latter-day politics, delivered at the rate of three or four or a dozen a day, as in modern times. Three or four speeches a week was the rule, and the audiences often were composed largely of men who had traveled twenty miles or farther by

At an election held at the house of John McNeil  
in the New Salem precinct in the County of Sangamon  
and State of Illinois on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of September  
in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and  
thirty two the following named persons received the num-  
ber of votes annexed to their respective names for  
Constable

John Clary had Forty-one	Votes for Constable
John R. Henderson had Twenty-two	Votes for Constable
William McNeely had Thirteen	Votes for Constable
Baxter B. Bleney had Nine -	Votes for Constable
Edmund Greer had Four -	Votes for Constable

James Rutledge      {  
Hugh Armstrong      {  
James White      }  
Judges of the election

Attest

: As Clerk of the election  
William Lincoln

I certify that the above judges and clerks  
were qualified according to law  
September 20. 1832.      Bowling Green T.D.

#### ELECTION RETURN WRITTEN BY LINCOLN.

This was Mr. Lincoln's first official document. While a resident of New Salem he frequently was clerk of election.

wagon or on horseback over prairie roads. The speeches were long, but the people heard them through with eagerness. It was no uncommon thing in that day for an audience at a political meeting to be held by a public speaker spellbound for three or four hours at a time. As Lincoln went about the State talking against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and "squatter sovereignty" he added vastly to his reputation as a public speaker and he rapidly became the recognized leader of the Republican party in Illinois.

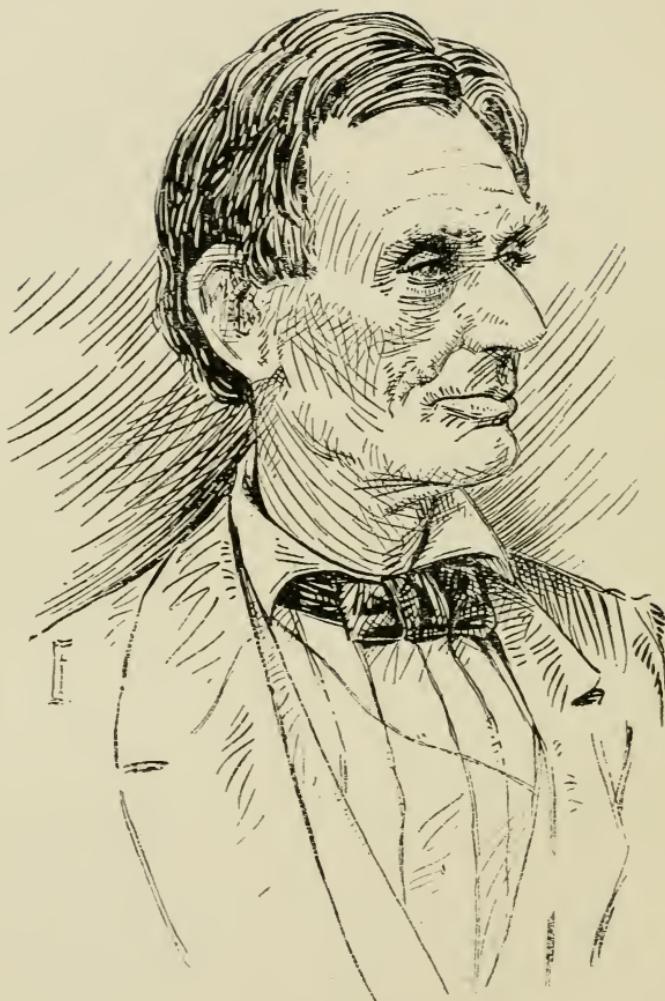
The new Republican party lost the State of Illinois in the national election of 1856, for the reason that the conservatives, including many Old Line Whigs, refused to support Fremont and voted for Fillmore; but on the State ticket the new party had been united and it elected its candidate for governor, William H. Bissell. The result thus showed that the Republicans were now in the majority in the State. The thing needed was party harmony, and Lincoln set about to unite and solidify the new party. "Let by-gones be by-gones," said he; "let past differences as nothing be; and with steady eye on the real issue let us reinaugurate the good old 'central idea' of the republic. We can do it. The human heart is with us; God is with us. We shall again be able, not to declare that 'all States are equal,' nor not that 'all citizens as citizens are equal,' but to renew the broader, better declaration, including both these and much more, that 'all men are created equal'."

It was apparent to the far-seeing mind of Lincoln that the year 1858 was to witness an epoch-making combat in Illinois. The second term of Stephen A. Douglas as United States Senator was about to expire. The "Little

Giant" not only was a candidate for reëlection, but all over the country he was regarded as the probable nominee of the Democratic party for President in 1860. Twice (in 1852 and again in 1856), he had come near winning that honor, and now if the southern wing of the Democratic party could be placated he was almost certain to be the presidential nominee. Douglas had risen to a most exalted place in public life. He was then recognized as the leading statesman of the country. His doctrine of "popular sovereignty," as enunciated in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854, had become the leading political issue of the time. It had given birth to the new Republican party, organized to combat "popular sovereignty" and the extension of slavery. Lincoln must have foreseen that the senatorial contest of 1858 was to be a test of strength between the old and the new parties. It was a mere incident that Senator Douglas was seeking reëlection; the real conflict was one of principle and Illinois was destined to be the battle-ground. Here the line of battle was to be marked out for the greater combat that was to occur two years later.

Douglas was not without his troubles within his own party. He had broken with President Buchanan on the Lecompton question. Buchanan wanted Kansas admitted with the Lecompton constitution, which permitted slavery. Douglas declared that the Lecompton constitution had been fraudulently adopted, that it did not represent the will of the people, and that the attempt to bring Kansas into the Union as a slave State was an outrage and a flagrant violation of his "great principle of popular sovereignty." When the Democratic State convention, assem-

bled at Springfield April 21, 1858, adopted a resolution approving the course of Senator Douglas and declaring for his reëlection, a number of delegates, Buchanan Democrats, withdrew and held a separate convention. But the anti-Douglas movement within the Democratic party was not formidable. Every member of the lower house of Congress from Illinois stood by him and his leadership of the party in Illinois was not seriously disputed. No other Democrat had the temerity to be candidate for Senator against him.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

As he appeared at the time of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates in 1858. Mr. Lincoln did not wear a beard until after his election to the Presidency in 1860.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE NEW ISSUE — “A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF CAN NOT STAND.”

The Republican State convention was held at Springfield June 16, 1858. For some time beforehand it was generally conceded that Abraham Lincoln would be brought forward by the convention as the party's candidate for United States Senator to oppose Senator Douglas. Lincoln carefully prepared a speech for the occasion. He was not unaware of the great responsibility that devolved upon him and every word to be uttered received the most thoughtful consideration. He was about to give expression to a thought that had gradually evolved in his mind out of the controversy of the preceding four years. He was to promulgate a new issue. The new doctrine was stated so boldly that it startled many of Lincoln's own followers, who declared he had made a “political blunder.” But Lincoln had carefully weighed his words; he had anticipated and was ready to answer every criticism; and he held to the issue there proclaimed, not only through that memorable campaign, but until he had lived to see it justified by the great events that swiftly followed.

This speech of Lincoln passed into history as the “house-divided” speech — a designation given it from the following passage:

“*A house divided against itself can not stand.*” I

believe this Government can not endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States — old as well as new, North as well as South."

Immediately Douglas savagely attacked the doctrine thus boldly proclaimed by Lincoln. He declared it was "sectional" and "revolutionary." "Why can not this Government exist divided into free and slave States?" thundered Douglas. "Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Hamilton and Jay and the great men of that day made this Government divided into free and slave States and left each State perfectly free to do as it pleased on the subject of slavery. Why can it not exist on the same principles on which our fathers made it?"

The attack of Douglas brought the attention of the whole country to the "house divided" speech of Mr. Lincoln. Very soon every eye was turned to Illinois.

Lincoln had given a new aspect to the slavery question. Up to that time every attempt at legislation affecting slavery had been based on the theory of compromise. There had been two famous "compromises" — the Missouri compromise of 1820 and the compromise of 1850. Both had been founded on the theory that the institution of slavery was to be protected and perpetuated. The opposition had been directed, not against the institution

itself, but against the spread of slavery into the territory dedicated to freedom. But here was a new doctrine proclaiming that the day of compromise was at an end, that this Government could not permanently endure half slave and half free, that it must become eventually all slave or all free.



STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS.

His Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 caused Abraham Lincoln to re-enter politics; and his debates with Lincoln in 1858 made the latter a national figure and a presidential possibility.

Senator Douglas and Mr. Lincoln were long political rivals but always personal friends. When Mr. Lincoln was elevated to the Presidency, Mr. Douglas, defeated candidate for the office, became one of his loyal supporters. At the inaugural ceremonies, March 4, 1861, he held the President's hat as a token of his sustaining friendship. At Springfield, Ill., April 25, he delivered a speech of great eloquence and force, appealing to his followers throughout the nation to rally to the support of the Union, declaring that "the shortest way to peace is the most stupendous and unanimous preparation for war." He died in Chicago June 3, 1861.

## The “Little Giant”: A Tribute

American history furnishes no higher example of patriotism than the conduct of Stephen A. Douglas in 1861. There was peculiar pathos in his death. Lincoln lived a finished life; his great mission was accomplished, and he passed beyond the purple hills in the resplendent glory of an imperishable fame. Douglas died in the noonday of life, his life-ambition unrealized, with magnificent possibilities yet unfulfilled. The American people owe much to Stephen A. Douglas; and if Abraham Lincoln could speak once more he would gladly pay his antagonist the tribute of praise that belongs to a great and patriotic man.

*From the oration, “The Two Giants of Illinois,”  
by J. McCann Davis.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES — ANTAGONISTS ON THE STUMP BUT PERSONAL FRIENDS.

As the campaign started out, Lincoln was obliged to be content with following Douglas and replying to him as opportunity offered. He found himself at a distinct disadvantage; he was obliged to talk almost entirely to Republican audiences, and he had to bear the charge of "annoying" Judge Douglas by this "unfair" procedure of "following him about the State." Lincoln longed for an opportunity to talk to those who opposed him — to the voters who were followers of Douglas. It was not enough that he bolster up the faith of his own followers and inspire them with enthusiasm; what he desired most to do was to make converts to the new party. He reasoned that he could best do this by speaking with Senator Douglas from the same platform and to the same audience. He therefore challenged Douglas to a series of joint debates, and Douglas accepted the challenge, with the result that debates were held at seven cities in the State — Ottawa, Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy and Alton — beginning August 21 and ending October 15.

These debates at once attracted national attention. Douglas had many advantages. He was of "world-wide renown." In prestige as a statesman he was without a

peer. He was rated, too, as the greatest debater in the United States Senate. As for Lincoln it may be said that he was well known, but that probably one hundred other men in the United States could claim as great or greater distinction than he had yet attained. Lincoln himself felt keenly the disparity between himself and Douglas in point of reputation. In these debates, as on previous occasions, he expressed his admiration for his famous opponent. He was free to acknowledge that Douglas had reached a place far higher than any he himself could hope to attain. "His name fills the nation and is not unknown even in foreign lands," said Lincoln. "I affect no contempt for the high eminence he has reached. So reached that the oppressed of my species might have shared with me in the elevation, I would rather stand on that eminence than wear the richest crown that ever pressed a monarch's brow."

In personal appearance and style of oratory, there was the most marked difference between Douglas and Lincoln. In stature, Lincoln towered an even twelve inches above his rival. Douglas, in his manner of speaking, was dignified, august and forceful. He was possessed of a deep, sonorous voice. He spoke with great deliberation and his well-rounded sentences came out with tremendous impressiveness. He rarely indulged in anecdotes and there were few attempts at humor. He was desperately in earnest. In majesty and convincing power of speech, Douglas has had few equals among American orators.

Lincoln was the antithesis of Douglas. "He was lean in flesh and ungainly in figure," says W. H. Herndon, his law partner and biographer. "When he began speak-

ing, his voice was shrill, piping and unpleasant. His manner, his attitude, his dark, yellow face, wrinkled and dry, his oddity of pose, his diffident movements — everything seemed to be against him, but only for a short time. \* \* \* As he proceeded he became somewhat animated. \* \* \* His style was clear, terse and compact. \* \* \* He spoke with effectiveness and to move the judgment as well as the emotions of men. \* \* \* In defense of the Declaration of Independence — his greatest inspiration — he was ‘tremendous in the directness of his utterances; he rose to impassioned eloquence, unsurpassed by Patrick Henry, Mirabeau, or Vergniaud, as his soul was inspired with the thought of human right and Divine justice.’ His little gray eyes flashed in a face aglow with the fire of his profound thoughts; and his uneasy movements and diffident manner sunk themselves beneath the wave of righteous indignation that came sweeping over him. Such was Lincoln the orator.”

The times were intensely partisan and both combatants suffered unjust attacks in the opposition newspapers. The Chicago *Times* portrayed Lincoln as an ignorant, illiterate fellow, who scarcely could utter a sentence without a grammatical blunder. This was the man who, a few years later, was to be acknowledged one of the great masters of the English tongue.

But the personal relations between Douglas and Lincoln were most cordial throughout the debates, as they always had been. On the stump Douglas frequently assumed a belligerent attitude; but this was merely a part of the forensic combat. “ My second reason for not hav-

ing a personal encounter with the Judge," said Lincoln on one occasion, "is that I do not believe he wants it himself. [Laughter.] He and I are about the best friends in the world and when we get together he would no more think of fighting me than of fighting his wife." At Freeport it is related that "presently Lincoln and Douglas came out on the balcony of the hotel (the Brewster House). They stepped out arm in arm and the crowd cheered and cheered. Neither Lincoln nor Douglas attempted to say anything. They just stood there for a minute bowing again and again to the crowd and every time they bowed a bigger shout went up."

A survivor of the Quincy debate relates the following personal experience: "I was a boy when Lincoln and Douglas debated in Quincy. After the speeches were over men crowded to the platform and some of us boys thought there was going to be a fight. We stood around awhile; some men were shaking hands with Lincoln and others with Douglas. Pretty soon Douglas grabbed Lincoln by the arm and said, 'Come on, Abe; let's go to the hotel,' and they walked off together. That ended the prospect of a fight and we boys went away somewhat disappointed." (Statement of Captain Samuel H. Bradley, of Mendon, Illinois, to the author.)

## CHAPTER IX.

### LINCOLN'S QUESTION AT FREEPORT AND DOUGLAS' ANSWER.

The feature of the Lincoln-Douglas debates about which most has been written was the passage at Freeport, in the second debate, in which Lincoln propounded the question that brought forth from Douglas the reply that sought to reconcile the Dred Scott decision with his doctrine of "popular sovereignty." Lincoln's question was:

"Can the people of a United States territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State constitution?"

Douglas replied as follows: "I answer emphatically, as Mr. Lincoln has heard me answer a hundred times from every stump in Illinois, that in my opinion the people of a Territory can, by lawful means, exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a State constitution. [Enthusiastic applause.] Mr. Lincoln knew that I had answered that question over and over again. He heard me argue the Nebraska Bill on that principle all over the State in 1854, in 1855, and in 1856, and he has no excuse for pretending to be in doubt as to my position on that question. It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the

Constitution, the people have the lawful means to introduce it or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery can not exist an hour or a day anywhere, unless it is supported by local police regulations. ['Right, right.'] Those police regulations can only be established by the local Legislature; and if the people are opposed to slavery, they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectually prevent the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave territory or a free territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska Bill. I hope Mr. Lincoln deems my answer satisfactory on that point."

It is said that prior to the Freeport debate Lincoln had told some of his friends — men who were recognized leaders of the new Republican party — of his purpose to ask this question, and that they had unanimously advised against it, on the ground that Douglas' answer was certain to give him a distinct advantage; that Lincoln had persistently ignored this argument and had declared that he proposed to drive Douglas "into a corner," giving him the alternative of two answers — one that would defeat him for the Senate, the other that, while it probably would reëlect him to the Senate, would alienate the Southern Democrats and thus defeat him for the presidency two years later.

The truth is that in his reply to Lincoln's celebrated question, Douglas said nothing that was not already quite

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well understood. Almost the identical statement had been made in his speech at Bloomington six weeks before the Freeport debate. Lincoln heard the Bloomington speech (he occupied a seat on the platform), and of course understood Douglas' position perfectly.

But Lincoln's question at Freeport was important, because it brought fresh attention to the point he sought to make, namely, that "popular sovereignty," which gave the people of a territory the right to have slavery or not to have it, and the Dred Scott decision, which held that the slave owner might take his "property" into any territory, were irreconcilable. The reply of Douglas at Freeport augmented his breach with the South, but it was in no sense the cause of the breach, as many writers have erroneously assumed. Douglas had broken with the South the year before over the Lecompton question. Southern Democratic leaders already regarded him with suspicion and disfavor.

## CHAPTER X.

### AFTER THE DEBATES — LINCOLN BECOMES A PRESIDENTIAL POSSIBILITY.

Douglas came out of the contest of 1858 the victor, so far as immediate results were concerned; for he was re-elected to the Senate. On the popular vote the Republicans had carried the State, but the Democrats still controlled the Legislature. Lincoln accepted his defeat good-naturedly and philosophically.

Douglas now loomed larger than ever on the political horizon. The New York *Herald* (having in mind, of course, the opposition of President Buchanan), declared the election of Douglas "one of the most wonderful personal victories ever achieved by a public man." The New York *Evening Post* said: "We may expect to see a Douglas party immediately formed in all the States, with its avowed champions and its recognized presses." "It was manifest," said the New York *Tribune* of November 9, "that his triumph would render inevitable his nomination for President at Charleston in 1860. He must either be nominated or the Democratic party practically retires from the contest, surrendering the Government to the Republicans." The Boston *Daily Advertiser* of November 6 said: "We think it may now be regarded as settled that the Democratic party will be thoroughly reorganized upon the Douglas-Forney basis in anticipa-

tion of the presidential campaign of 1860. \* \* \* The South must understand perfectly well from the recent results in Pennsylvania and Illinois that its only hope of preventing an overwhelming victory of the Republicans in 1860 lies in adopting the Douglas creed. Some of the Southern leaders of the party have already hastened to do this."

But if the outcome was gratifying to Douglas, it was far more important to Lincoln, although its effect upon his political fortunes and upon the political events soon to follow was not then perfectly clear. Prior to his debates with Douglas nobody had thought of Lincoln in connection with the presidency. Back in June, just before he made his "house divided" speech, a vote on presidential candidates was taken on board a train crowded with delegates to the Republican State convention. Every man who had been mentioned for the presidency received a few votes. Lyman Trumbull, then in the Senate, was given seven votes, and Governor Bissell two votes. But not a vote was cast for Abraham Lincoln.

But now the debates with Douglas had made Lincoln a national figure, and already there were suggestions that he was the logical candidate of the Republican party for President in 1860. It is significant that at Mansfield, Ohio, on the night of November 5, three days after the election, a mass meeting was held and resolutions were adopted favoring Lincoln's nomination for President.

The New York *Herald*, early in November, announced: "The following ticket has been offered at Cincinnati: For President, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois; for Vice-President, John P. Kennedy of Maryland — with a

platform embracing protection to American industry, the improvement of the western rivers and harbors, and opposition to the extension of slavery by free emigration into the territories." The Peoria *Daily Message* said: "Defeat works wonders with some men. It has made a hero of Abraham Lincoln. Two or three Republican journals of different sections of the Union are beginning to talk of him as a candidate for Vice-President, with Seward for President; and a Republican meeting held at Mansfield, Ohio, raises him a notch higher by announcing him their candidate for President." "He entered upon the canvass with a reputation confined to his own State," said the Chicago *Press and Tribune*. "He closes it with his name a household word wherever the principles he holds are honored and with the respect of his opponents in all sections of the country." "No man of this generation has grown more rapidly before the country than Lincoln in this canvass," said the Lowell (Mass.) *Journal and Courier*. The Illinois *State Register*, published at Springfield, recognized as the organ of Senator Douglas, said December 1: "If the Republican journals are to be taken as an index, Mr. Lincoln is to be made a presidential candidate upon the creed which he enunciated here in his June convention speech."

## CHAPTER XI.

“WHAT’S THE USE OF TALKING OF ME FOR PRESIDENT?”  
SAYS LINCOLN.

Thus Abraham Lincoln, in the space of a few months, had risen to presidential stature. Out of the West had come a new star in the political firmament. Lincoln for President! The words must have had an enchanting sound to this man of trials and struggles and disappointments. Yet he gave no sign of elation. He offered no encouragement to the President-makers.

While the debates were in progress Jesse W. Fell of Bloomington, then a prominent and active Republican and a personal friend of Lincoln, had occasion to travel through the East, and he came home impressed with the favorable things being said about Lincoln in the Eastern States. One evening in Bloomington he told Lincoln of the reputation he was getting in other States and suggested that he would make a formidable candidate for President.

“What’s the use of talking of me for President,” replied Lincoln, “while we have such men as Seward, Chase and others, who are so much better known to the people, and whose names are so intimately associated with the principles of the Republican party? \* \* \* I admit that I am ambitious and would like to be President. I am not insensible to the compliment you pay me and the

interest you manifest in the matter; but there is no such good luck in store for me as the presidency of these United States." And in response to Mr. Fell's request for a biographical sketch that he might publish in the East, Lincoln said: "There is nothing in my early history that would interest you or anybody else; and, as Judge Davis says, 'it won't pay.' Good night." And thus Lincoln sought to dismiss the subject.

After the debates with Douglas, Lincoln went back to his law office. The country was too busy sounding the praises of the "big" men — the men who were on the national stage in Washington and elsewhere — to give much thought to Lincoln. For there were several men who were energetically at work to capture the presidential nomination in 1860 and who managed to keep in the limelight. Lincoln was not among the number.

A wave of Lincoln sentiment, as we have seen, swept over the country immediately following the debate with Douglas, but to all appearances it had subsided. The country was not clamoring for Lincoln. But the events of the ensuing year all conspired to make him the inevitable nominee of his party for President. We may guess that Lincoln continued thinking deeply, as little as he talked, and that he was not unaware that the trend of events made him more and more the logical presidential candidate of the Republican party. But the country did not so view the situation — not yet.

## CHAPTER XII.

LINCOLN DECIDES THAT HE HAS A "FIGHTING CHANCE,"  
AND STARTS IN TO GET ILLINOIS DELEGATION.

The talk of Lincoln for President went on quietly in Illinois. The Republican party in the State had among its leaders some very able men and astute politicians. Judge David Davis, Judge Stephen T. Logan, John M. Palmer, Richard J. Oglesby, Leonard Swett, O. H. Browning, Jesse W. Fell—all were politicians of the highest rank, and all were enthusiastically for the nomination of Lincoln for President.

Lincoln, all through the year 1859, gave his friends little encouragement. "I must in all candor say I do not think myself fit for the presidency," he wrote in April of that year.

It was not until late in the year that Lincoln seems to have considered himself seriously a presidential candidate. Early in 1860 he apparently had decided that he had at least a fighting chance, and that the thing of first importance was to make sure of the Illinois delegation.

For there was grave danger that the delegation to the national convention from Lincoln's own State would be divided. Lincoln was a mere chance—only a "prospect." Many politicians in the State, anxious to "land

with the winner," did not take kindly to the Lincoln candidacy.

The presidential candidate who towered above all others was William H. Seward of New York. He had been governor of New York, the greatest State in the Union; he had almost completed a second term in the United States Senate; he had been conspicuous in the compromise legislation of 1850; he had fought the Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854; he had become the exponent of the "higher law," and, discussing the Dred Scott Decision in 1858, he had announced the "irrepressible conflict." The whole country knew Seward; he was a master politician, and he had an organization that extended to every State that was to be represented at Chicago; and all in all he seemed the logical and inevitable nominee of his party for President.

In Illinois, Seward was making an organized effort to get at least a part of the State delegation. The work was being done quietly, but effectively. It was Seward's game to split up the Illinois delegation, so that Lincoln would appear weak in his home State. Lincoln knew well what was going on, and he appreciated fully the importance of checking the Seward movement and of preventing a division of the State delegation. Out in Kansas a friend, who seemed to be in a position to speak authoritatively, had promised Lincoln the delegation from that State; but, to Lincoln's chagrin, the convention instructed the delegation for Seward.

The Seward movement made considerable headway in the north end of the State, where many county conventions either refrained from indorsing Lincoln or openly

eulogized Seward. In the south end of the State the Seward people were adroitly encouraging the candidacy of Edward Bates of Missouri. On February 9, 1860, Lincoln wrote Norman B. Judd a letter, in which he said:

I am not in a position where it would hurt much for me not to be nominated on the national ticket, but I am where it would hurt some for me not to get the Illinois delegates. What I expected when I wrote the letter to Messrs. Dole and others is now happening. Your discomfited assailants are most bitter against me, and they will, for revenge upon me, lay to the Bates egg in the South, and to the Seward egg in the North, and go far toward squeezing me out in the middle with nothing. Can you not help me a little in this matter in your end of the vineyard?

Lincoln looked forward to the State convention with many misgivings. The convention was to be held at Decatur May 9. The "Seward eggs" promised to hatch an unpleasantly large brood of delegates. But some things were happening of which even Lincoln was not advised — things not very big in themselves, but destined to be tremendously important in ultimate results.





GOV. RICHARD J. OGLESBY.

(From a painting in the Governor's Office, State House, Springfield, Ill.)

It was "Dick" Oglesby, then a Decatur lawyer, who planned and directed the "rail episode" in the State convention in 1860, which stampeded the convention for Lincoln.

## CHAPTER XIII.

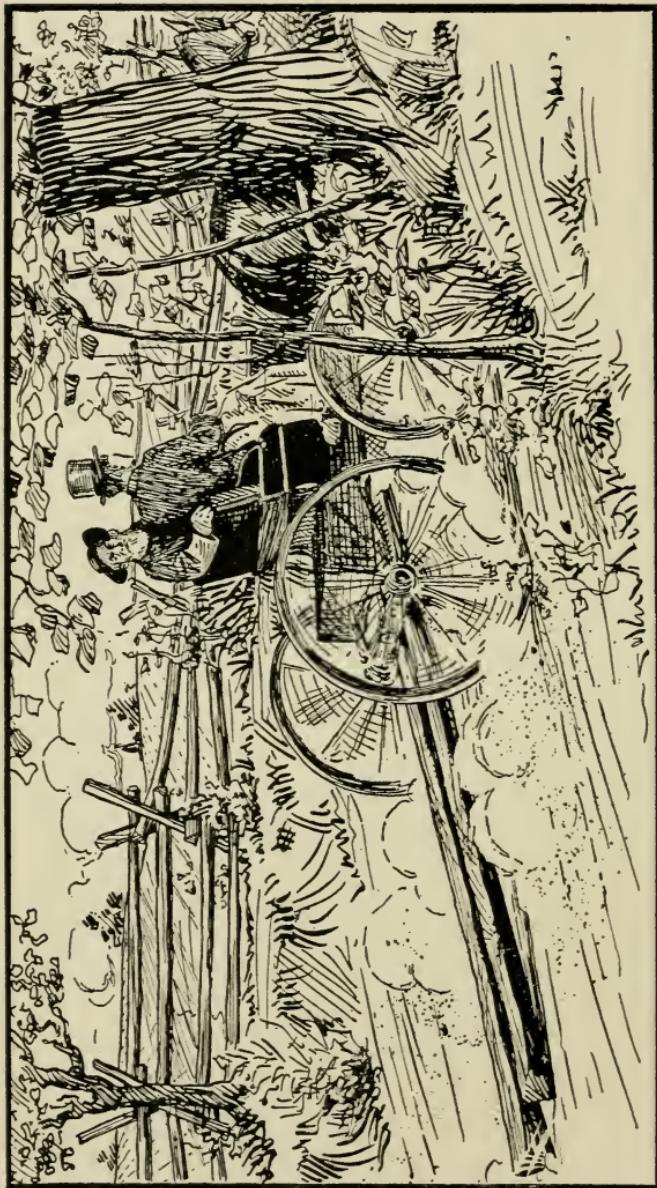
### STORY OF A FENCE RAIL—HOW “DICK” OGLESBY AND JOHN HANKS STAMPEDED THE STATE CONVENTION.

There lived in Decatur in 1860 a brilliant young lawyer and politician of the name of Richard J. Oglesby. “Dick” Oglesby had made the acquaintance of Lincoln when a mere boy; he had been an ardent admirer of Lincoln for twenty years; he believed in Lincoln and was for him for President with all that vehement, rugged enthusiasm that distinguished the Oglesby of after years.

“Dick” Oglesby was astute, far-seeing; he had imagination, and Lincoln’s magnificent possibilities as a popular candidate for President loomed large in his mind. He was acquainted with Lincoln’s early life, his lowly origin, his rise from poverty. He knew that out on the Sangamon bottom, thirty years before, Lincoln, with the aid of John Hanks, had split rails and built a fence.

Gov. Oglesby, a few months before his death in 1899, related to the writer the story of his strategy to “kill the Seward boom and commit the State unreservedly and unitedly to Lincoln.” Oglesby, like Lincoln, foresaw the danger of a divided delegation, and he proposed to do something that would make the delegation solidly and enthusiastically for Lincoln.

“I had known John Hanks all my life,” said Governor Oglesby to the writer. “He was a Democrat, but a



“DICK” OGLESBY AND JOHN HANKS BRINGING THE RAILS FROM THE  
SANGAMON BOTTOM.

(From a drawing made expressly for this work)  
“We took two of the rails,” said Oglesby, “and tied them under the hind axle-tree of my new  
buggy and started for town.”

great friend of Lincoln. Years before they had gone together on a flatboating expedition down the Mississippi. He had wanted to vote for Lincoln for United States Senator, but he could not do this without voting for the local Republican candidates for the Legislature. As soon as he heard that Lincoln might be nominated for President, he was bound to vote for 'old Abe.'

"One day I was talking with John about Abe, and he said that in 1830 they made a clearing twelve miles west of Decatur. There was a patch of timber — fifteen or twenty acres — and they had cleared it; they had built a cabin, cut the trees, maulled rails, and put up a fence.

"'John,' said I, 'did you split rails down there with old Abe?'

"'Yes; every day,' he replied.

"'Do you suppose you could find any of them now?'

"'Yes,' he said. 'The last time I was down there, ten years ago, there were plenty of them left.'

"'What are you going to do to-morrow?'

"'Nothing.'

"'Then,' said I, 'come around and get in my buggy, and we will drive down there.'

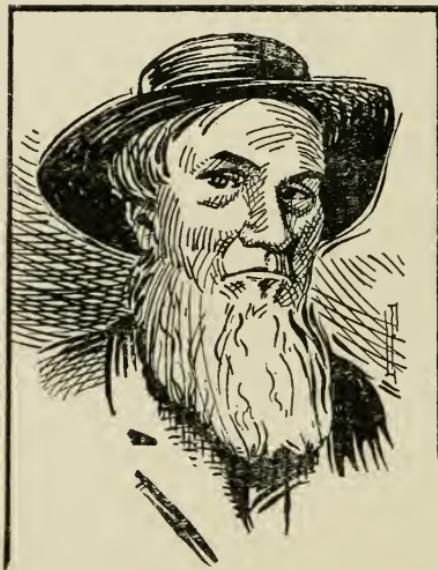
"So the next day we drove out to the old clearing. We turned in by the timber, and John said:

"'Dick, if I don't find any black-walnut rails, nor any honey-locust rails, I won't claim it's the fence Abe and I built.'

"Presently John said, 'There's the fence!'

"'But look at these great trees,' said I.

"'Certainly,' he answered. 'They have all grown up since.'



JOHN HANKS.

Cousin of Abraham Lincoln. Hanks helped Lincoln make three thousand rails in the Sangamon bottom in 1830. It was he who carried the "rail banner" into the Republican State Convention at Decatur, May 10, 1860.

"John got out. I stayed in the buggy. John kneeled down and commenced chipping the rails of the old fence with his knife. Soon he came back with black-walnut shavings and honey-locust shavings.

"'There they are!' said he, triumphantly, holding out the shavings. 'They are the identical rails we made.'

"Then I got out and made an examination of the fence. There were many black-walnut and honey-locust rails.

"'John,' said I, 'where did you cut these rails?'

"'I can take you to the stumps,' he answered.

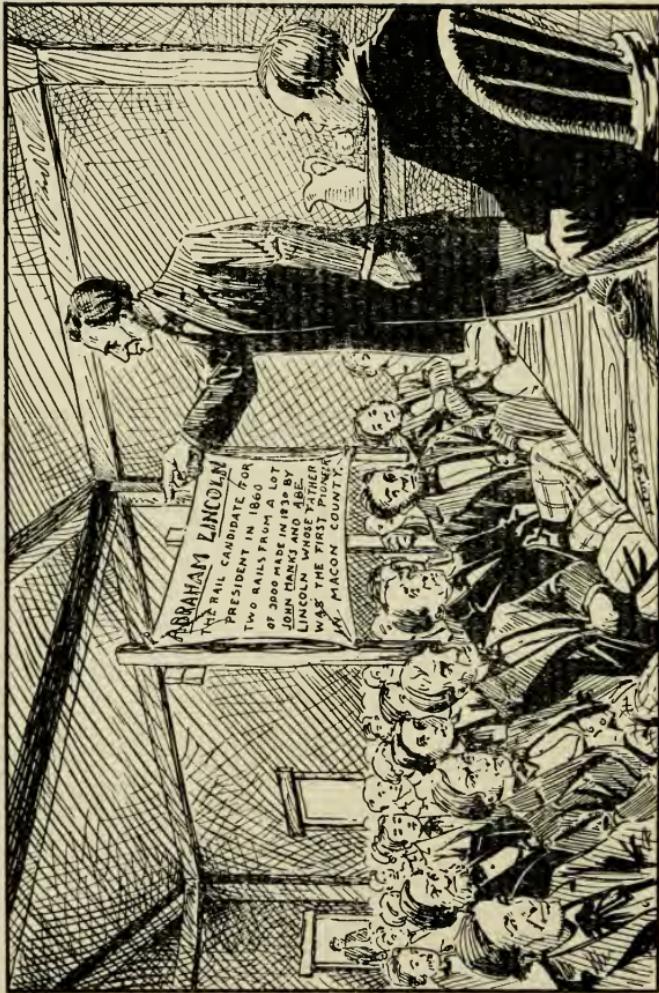
"'We will go down there,' said I.

"We drove about a hundred yards.

"'Now,' said he, 'look! There's a black-walnut stump; there's another — another — another. Here's where we cut the trees down and split the rails. Then we got a horse and wagon, and hauled them in, and built the fence, and also the cabin.'

"We took two of the rails and tied them under the hind axle-tree of my new buggy, and started for town. People would occasionally pass, and think something had broken. We let them think so, for we didn't wish to tell anybody just what we were doing. We kept right on until we got to my barn. There we hid the rails until the day of the convention.

"Before the convention met I talked with several Republicans about my plan, and we fixed it up that old John Hanks should take the rails into the convention. We made a banner, attached to a board across the top of the rails, with the inscription:



LINCOLN ADDRESSING THE DECATUR CONVENTION, 1860.

(From a drawing from description; made expressly for this work.)

"Gentlemen," said Lincoln, "John and I did make some rails down there; and if these aren't the identical rails we made, they certainly look very much like them."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

The Rail Candidate for President in 1860.

Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830 by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln, whose father was the first pioneer of Macon county.

"After the convention got under way, I arose and announced that an old Democrat desired to make a contribution to the convention. The proceedings stopped, and all was expectancy and excitement. Then in walked old John with the rails. Lincoln was there in a corner, trying to escape observation.

"'How are you, Abe?' said John, familiarly, as he passed.

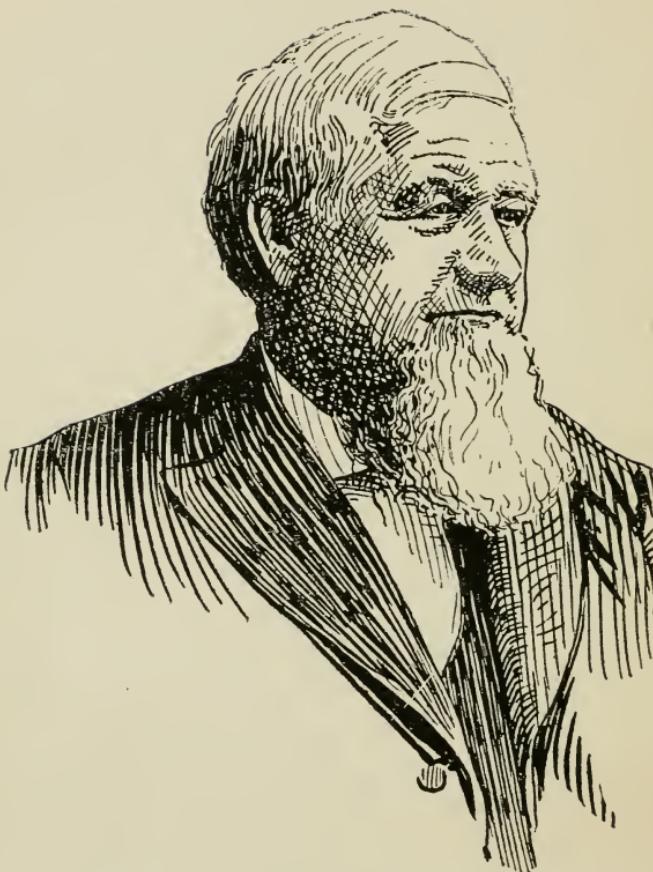
"'How are you, John?' Lincoln answered with equal familiarity.

"Then the convention cheered and cheered. There were loud and persistent calls for a speech from Lincoln. Abe had not known that the rails were to be brought in. He hardly knew what to say about them.

"'Gentlemen,' he finally said, 'John and I did make some rails down there; and if these aren't the identical rails we made, they certainly look very much like them.'

"From that time forward the rail was ever present in the campaign. There was a great demand for Lincoln rails. John Hanks sold the two that he brought into the convention. A man from Kentucky gave him five dollars for one. The next day he went out and got a wagon-load, and put them in my barn. He sold them for a dollar apiece. Then other people went into the business, and the supply seemed inexhaustible."

"By this time," says Lamon, one of Lincoln's biog-



GENERAL JOHN M. PALMER.

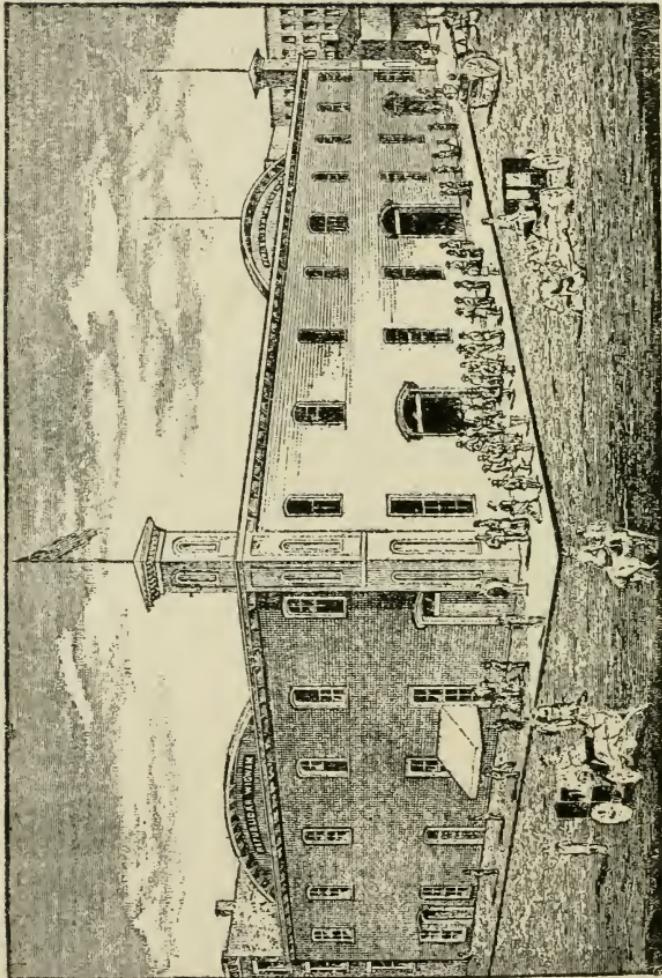
Who introduced and eloquently advocated the resolution in the Decatur Convention, May 10, 1860, instructing the Illinois delegation for Lincoln. General Palmer presided over the first Republican State Convention in Illinois, held at Bloomington, May 29, 1856.

rappers, writing of the rail episode in the Decatur convention, "the innocent Egyptians began to open their eyes—they saw plainly enough now the admirable presidential scheme unfolded to their view."

The Seward boom was dead. "Dick" Oglesby and old John Hanks and two fence rails had killed it. John M. Palmer was at once on his feet with a resolution declaring that "Abraham Lincoln is the first choice of the Republican party of Illinois for the presidency," and instructing "the delegates to the Chicago convention to use all honorable means to secure his nomination and to cast the vote of the State as a unit for him."

Thomas J. Turner, of Freeport, who had served in Congress with Lincoln in 1847-8, was there as a champion of Seward, and he bitterly attacked the resolution. Palmer replied in a speech of tremendous force, and the resolution was adopted amid great enthusiasm.

Thus vanished the specter of a "divided delegation" which had haunted Lincoln for many months. It turned out, as Nicolay and Hay remark in their biography, "that the Illinois Republicans sent a delegation to the Chicago convention full of personal devotion to Lincoln and composed of men of the highest standing and of consummate political ability, and their enthusiastic efforts in his behalf among the delegations from other States contributed largely to the final result."



THE WIGWAM, CHICAGO.  
From an old engraving. Here Lincoln was nominated for President by the Republican National Convention, May 18, 1860.

## CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE EVE OF THE NATIONAL CONVENTION — SEWARD ALMOST A CERTAINTY, BUT "ABE LINCOLN LOOMING UP."

The Decatur convention which thus committed Illinois to Lincoln was held only a week before the national convention was to open in Chicago. It is a remarkable fact that up to that time the Lincoln candidacy had been almost entirely ignored by the newspapers of the East. Within a few days the New York *Tribune*, the New York *Herald*, and the New York *Independent* had discussed presidential candidates. They had spoken of Seward, Banks, Chase, Cameron, Bates, McLean, Sumner, Fessenden, Bell, Wade, Fremont, and others; but strangely enough there was not a single mention of Lincoln even as a possibility.

Such was the situation only a few days before the Republican national convention opened at Chicago on the sixteenth of May, 1860. The astute Illinoisans had secured an important advantage (not then apparent to the opposition), when the national convention was brought to Chicago. As the delegates from far-off States began gathering, the Lincoln boom rapidly took formidable shape. On May 14 (Monday), two days before the convention opened, the New York *Herald*, in a dispatch from Chicago, declared that the contest had narrowed down to Seward, Lincoln and Wade. The

Boston *Herald* of the same day said: "Abe Lincoln is looming up to-night as a compromise candidate and his friends are in high spirits."

The Illinoisans, headed by Judge David Davis, worked adroitly and indefatigably. Lincoln sentiment spread with amazing rapidity among the delegates; but it was something of an undercurrent.

Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*, then the most influential paper in the country, was there with the proxy of a delegate from Oregon. He was not in sympathy with the Seward movement, but was for Judge Bates, of Missouri. But throughout the preliminary skirmishing and almost up to the moment of the opening ballot, Greeley, astute observer that he was, could see little chance to prevent Seward's nomination.

The convention was to convene on Wednesday, the 16th. On Saturday, the 12th, the Chicago correspondent wired the *Tribune* — and this represented Greeley's judgment, if the message was not actually written by him:

"Mr. Seward will lead, Mr. Bates will come next, Mr. Chase will be third, having some New England votes. Mr. Cameron will come next, and then Mr. Lincoln. The latter is being pressed by the Illinois delegations as a compromise candidate and would be accepted by all the Northwest cheerfully."

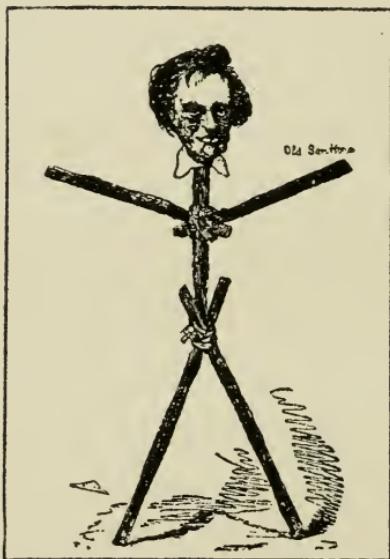
On Tuesday night the Chicago correspondent wired the *Tribune* that "Mr. Lincoln, of Illinois, is rising in prominence." At 10 o'clock the same night the correspondent wired:

"Dudley Field, of New York, and his friends have joined the party of Judge Bates, and efforts are making

to concentrate the opposition to Mr. Seward upon him. Mr. Lincoln, however, seems to be gaining ground, and his Illinois friends are greatly encouraged to-night at the prospect of his uniting the doubtful States and the Northwest."

The convention was to open on the following day. The Illinoisans had been working with great energy and skill, and the Lincoln "boom" had grown rapidly, but victory was not yet in sight. The Seward managers hoped even yet, after the initial ballot, to get some of the Illinois delegates away from Lincoln. Although the Illinois delegation was under iron-clad instructions for Lincoln, and although under the leadership of ardent Lincoln men, eight of the twenty-one delegates were rated as lukewarm; they could not see that Lincoln had more than a "fighting chance," and they were suspected of being ready to go over to Seward. To add to the embarrassment of this situation, "Long John" Wentworth, editor of the Chicago *Democrat*, although after the Lincoln-Douglas debates he had declared that Lincoln should be urged on the next national convention as the candidate of Illinois for President, was now in the hotel lobbies talking openly and loudly for Seward. Finally the Lincoln managers detailed a man to follow Wentworth and denounce him, and thus counteract his influence.

The Illinoisans had taken a long stride forward when on Monday, after a three days' struggle, they won over to Lincoln the entire delegation from Indiana. They labored persistently and unceasingly with other States. They impressed into service every man who



"A RAIL OLD WESTERN GENTLEMAN."

A caricature of the campaign of 1860. From the Oldroyd collection, Washington, D. C.

knew Lincoln to go out and talk about him—to tell of his romantic life, his humble birth, his rail-splitting and flat-boating, his fine character and his great ability. For the delegates were looking for an “available” candidate—for the man who could be elected. The principal objection to Seward was that he could not carry the doubtful States.

One of the things the Illinoisans had to combat was the movement to nominate Lincoln for Vice-President. General John M. Palmer, who was one of the most tireless workers for Lincoln, in a statement to the author in 1896, said :

“ The Seward men were perfectly willing that he should go on the tail of the ticket. We were not troubled so much by their antagonism as by the overtures they were constantly making to us. They literally overwhelmed us with kindness. Judge David Davis came to me in the Tremont House, greatly agitated at the way things were going. He said: ‘ Palmer, you must go with me at once to see the New Jersey delegation.’ I asked him what I could do. ‘ Well,’ said he, ‘ there is Judge Blank (naming a prominent delegate from that State), a grave and venerable judge, who is insisting that Lincoln shall be nominated for Vice-President—and Seward for President. We must convince the judge of his mistake.’

“ We went. I was introduced to Judge Blank and we talked about the matter for some time. Judge Blank praised Seward, but he was especially effusive in expressing his admiration for Lincoln. He thought that Seward was clearly entitled to first place, and that Lincoln’s eminent merits entitled him to second place.

"I listened for some time and then said: 'Judge Blank, you may nominate Mr. Lincoln for Vice-President, if you please; but I want you to understand that there are forty thousand Democrats in Illinois who will support this ticket if you will give them an opportunity; but we are not Whigs, and we never expect to be Whigs. We will never consent to support two old Whigs on this ticket. We are willing to vote for Mr. Lincoln with a Democrat on the ticket; but we will not consent to vote for two old Whigs.'

"The indignation of Judge Blank I have seldom seen equalled. Turning to Judge Davis he said fiercely:

"'Judge Davis, is it possible that party spirit so prevails in Illinois that Judge Palmer properly represents public opinion?'

"'Oh,' said Davis, affecting some distress at what I had said, 'Oh, my God, Judge, you can't account for the conduct of these old Locofocos. Will they do as Palmer says? Certainly. There are forty thousand of them, and, as Palmer says, not a d — d one of them will vote for two Whigs.'

"We left Judge Blank in a towering rage. When we were back at the Tremont House I said: 'Davis, you are an infernal rascal to sit there and hear that man berate me as he did. You really seemed to encourage him.'

"Judge Davis said nothing, but chuckled as if he greatly enjoyed the joke. This incident is illustrative of the kind of work we had to do. We were compelled to resort to this argument — that the old Democrats now ready to affiliate with the Republican party would not





tolerate two Whigs on the ticket — in order to break up the movement to nominate Lincoln for Vice-President."

One part of the game of the Lincoln men was a fight for time. Their candidate was gaining, and the longer the nomination was deferred the better his chances. It had been the purpose to name the candidate for President on Thursday, the 17th. Had that been done, Mr. Seward probably would have been nominated. But the Illinoisans shrewdly maneuvered for an adjournment — and got it.

During all Thursday night the Illinoisans worked desperately. Most of them did not go to bed at all. The supporters of other candidates also were busy. The problem was how to unite the opposition to Seward on an available candidate.

At midnight Thursday night the *New York Tribune* correspondent wired his paper:

"Though there is an increased disposition to gather about Mr. Lincoln, no effective combination of opposition is yet formed. Ohio is uncertain, Pennsylvania gives no positive assurances, and when New Jersey breaks but half goes to Mr. Seward. Part of the Missouri delegation prefer Mr. Seward to Mr. Lincoln.

"They want a conservative with whom to make a winning fight, or a straight-out radical for a contest of pure principle.

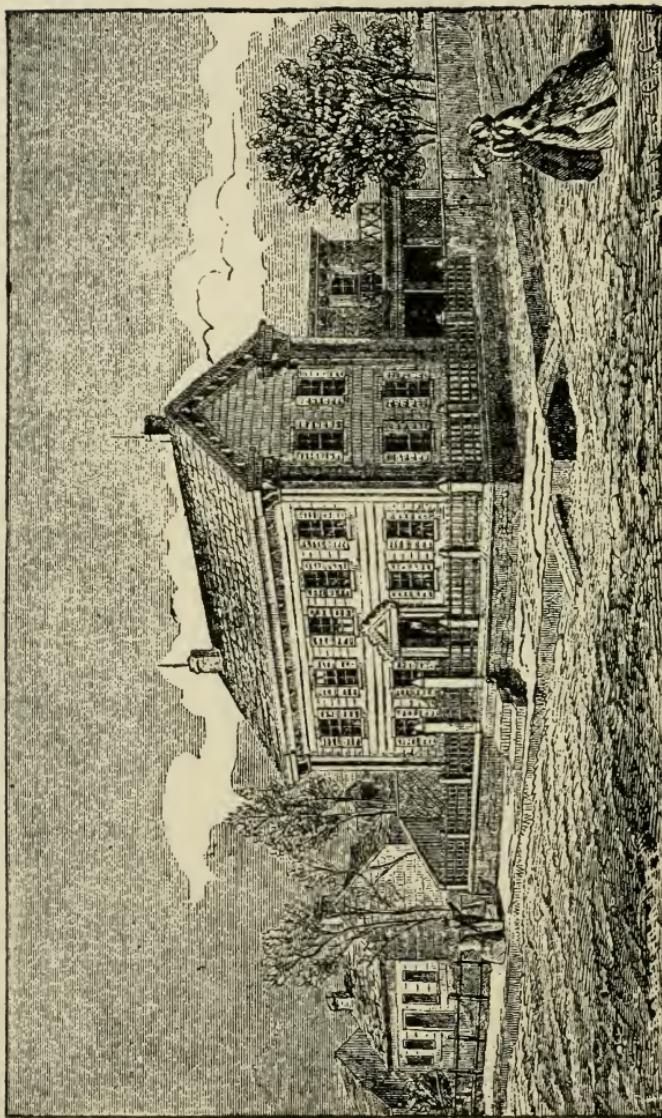
"New England is anxious and doubtful. She is puzzled. She hesitates both to desert Mr. Seward and to force him on the doubtful States. They are likely to be much cut up. The Massachusetts delegation have been in a labored conference against and show an increased disposition to leave Mr. Seward and go for Mr. Lincoln."

At the same hour (midnight) Horace Greeley personally wired the *Tribune*:

"My conclusion, from all that I can gather to-night, is that the opposition to Governor Seward can not concentrate on any candidate and that he will be nominated."

When the convention on Friday began its third day's session, the Seward men were still confident. They seemed to regard Seward's nomination as a foregone conclusion, and were now casting about for a satisfactory running mate.





LINCOLN'S RESIDENCE IN SPRINGFIELD, 1860.

From an old engraving. "There's a little woman down the street," said Lincoln when he heard of his nomination for President; "I'll go and tell her."

## CHAPTER XV.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN THE CONVENTION — LINCOLN THE VICTOR.

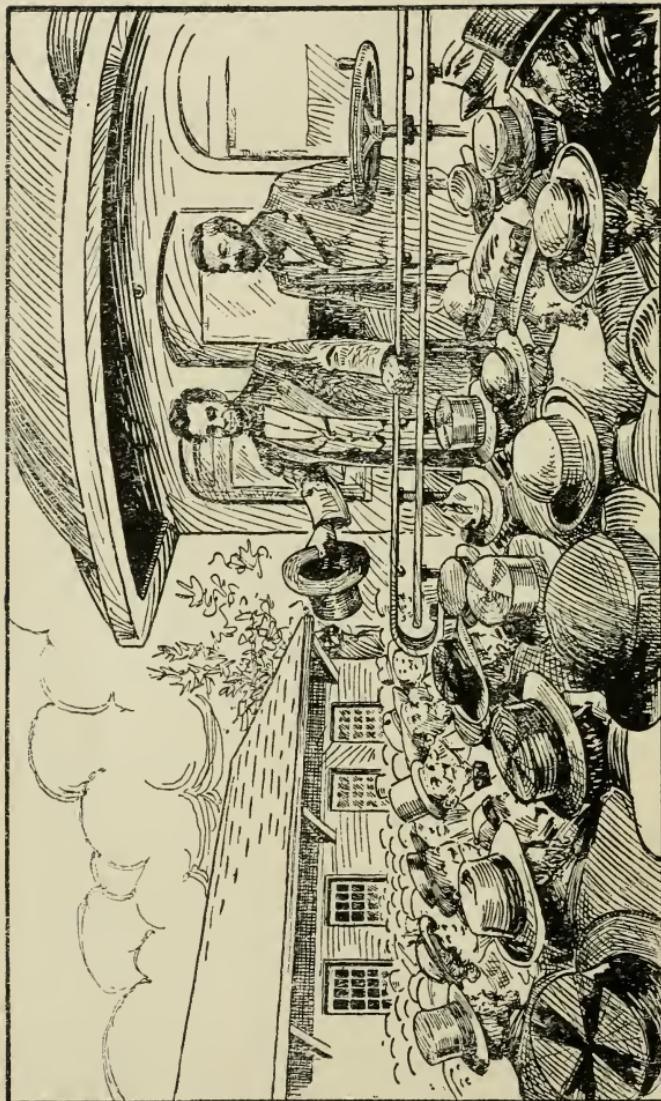
The convention was held in the old "Wigwam," a building erected for the occasion at the corner of Market and Lake streets. Eleven thousand persons packed the Wigwam. On the floor of the convention were some of the most distinguished men of the nation. In the galleries, hundreds of women, "gay in the high-peaked, flower-filled bonnets and bright shawls and plaids of the day," added to the brilliancy of the scene. Outside, surging in the streets, were from twenty to thirty thousand persons, eagerly awaiting some word of the proceedings within, shouted down by sentinels from the top of the building.

There were no nominating speeches—only the formal presentation of candidates' names. Norman B. Judd, in presenting Lincoln's name, said:

"Mr. President, I beg leave to offer as a candidate before this convention for President of the United States the name of Abraham Lincoln of Illinois."

That was all. No fulsome eulogy, no long-winded speech. The time for action had arrived.

There was a demonstration as each candidate was placed in nomination. The Seward men set up a deafening shout, so loud and long that it momentarily discon-



MR. LINCOLN'S DEPARTURE FROM SPRINGFIELD, FEBRUARY 11, 1861.

(From a drawing made from description expressly for this work.)

"I now leave," said Mr. Lincoln, addressing his old neighbors, "not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."

certed the Lincoln men. But they quickly recovered, and when Indiana seconded Lincoln's nomination pandemonium broke loose. It was evident that an overwhelming majority of the crowd in the galleries was for "Old Abe." "No language can describe it," wrote Leonard Swett, describing the scene. "A thousand steam whistles, a tribe of Comanches, headed by a choice vanguard from pandemonium, might have mingled in the scene unnoticed."

The balloting proceeded rapidly. The first ballot resulted: Seward,  $173\frac{1}{2}$ ; Lincoln, 102; Cameron,  $50\frac{1}{2}$ ; Chase, 49; Bates, 48; Dayton, 14; McLean, 12; Collamer, 10; scattering, 6.

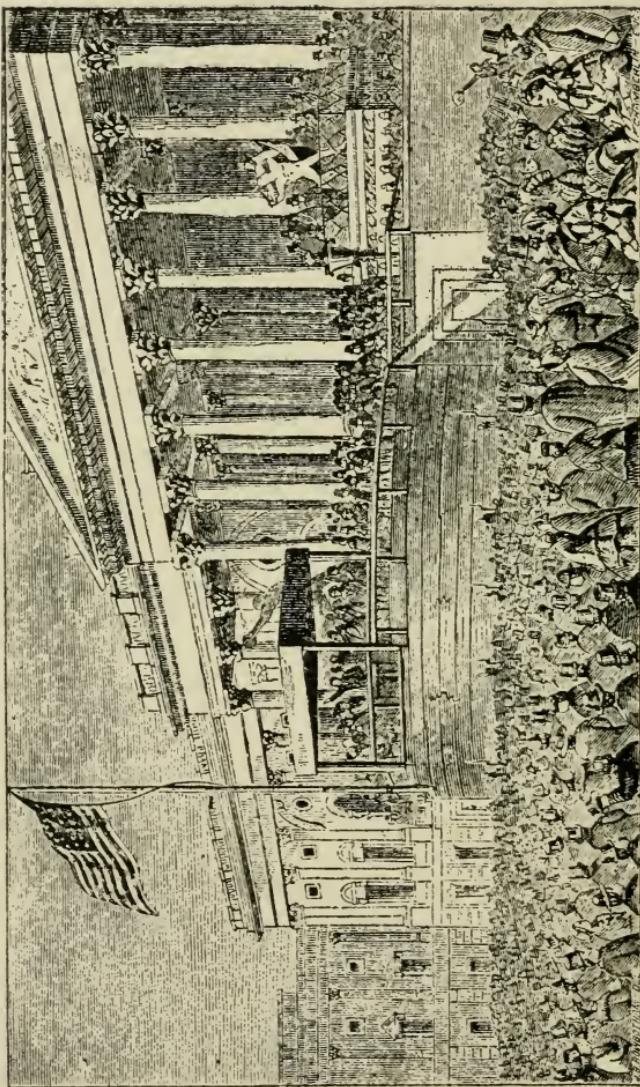
There being no choice, the second ballot was proceeded with, after Simon Cameron's name had been withdrawn. This ballot resulted: Seward,  $184\frac{1}{2}$ ; Lincoln, 181; Chase,  $42\frac{1}{2}$ ; Bates, 35; Dayton, 10; McLean, 8; scattering, 4.

The third ballot proceeded amid breathless silence. As the last State was called, Lincoln had  $230\frac{1}{2}$  votes, or within  $1\frac{1}{2}$  votes of the number necessary to nominate him. Before the result was announced Mr. Carter, of Ohio, arose and corrected the vote of that State, giving Lincoln four more votes, or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  more than the required number.

Lincoln was nominated, and now followed a wild struggle to "get into the band-wagon." State after State changed its vote to Lincoln. As finally announced the third ballot stood: Lincoln, 354; Seward,  $110\frac{1}{2}$ .

The men on the roof bellowed down to the people in the streets that Lincoln was nominated. "The first roar

LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURATION — MARCH 4, 1861.  
From an old engraving.



of cannon," says the New York *Tribune's* account, "soon mingled itself with the cheers of the people, and the same moment a man appeared in the hall bringing a large painting of Mr. Lincoln. \* \* \* Two cannons sent forth roar after roar in quick succession. Delegates tore up the stakes and boards bearing the names of the several States and waved them aloft over their heads, and the vast multitude before the platform were waving hats and handkerchiefs."

It was alleged afterward that the Lincoln managers, having charge of admissions, had packed the galleries with shouters for "Old Abe." "I do not believe the convention was unfairly 'packed' in Lincoln's interest," says Senator Shelby M. Cullom, who was present. "True, Lincoln's friends had charge of the Wigwam, and I have no doubt that the tickets of admission were judiciously distributed by them, and Lincoln had the galleries with him. That was inevitable, owing to the location of the convention in Chicago. But the cheering for Lincoln was not the result of any prearranged plan; it was spontaneous; it was infectious, too, and it captured the convention." (Statement of Senator Cullom to the author.)

While the national convention was in progress, Mr. Lincoln remained in Springfield and without apparent excitement or anxiety awaited the news from Chicago. Once or twice he joined in a game of "hand ball," then the favorite pastime of the professional men of the town. On Friday morning (the day of the nomination), he called at the office of James C. Conkling, a prominent lawyer, threw himself upon a lounge and remarked

rather wearily: "Well, Jim, I guess I'll go back to practicing law." Mr. Conkling had just returned from Chicago, and Mr. Lincoln was anxious to know what he thought of the outlook.

"I told him the tendency was to drop Seward," says Mr. Conkling — "that the outlook was very encouraging. He listened attentively and thanked me. \* \* \* He was not very sanguine of the result. He did not express the opinion that he would be nominated." (Statement of James C. Conkling to the author in 1896.)

After leaving Mr. Conkling's office, Mr. Lincoln had gone to the dry goods store of Ninian W. Edwards & Co., on an errand for Mrs. Lincoln. "I had started out," Mr. Lincoln afterward told a friend, T. W. S. Kidd, "and 'Jack' Smith (a member of the firm) walked to the door with me. As we stood there talking I heard a shout go up near the telegraph office. Then Jim Conkling's oldest boy came running up and told me I was nominated. That was the first I knew of it." "Jim Conkling's oldest boy," who thus "notified" Mr. Lincoln, was Clinton L. Conkling, now a prominent lawyer of Springfield.

Mr. Lincoln, in a few minutes, was surrounded by friends, who came hurrying up to congratulate him. He thanked them, but said he "must be going." "There is a little woman down on Eighth street," said he, "and I must go and tell her about this."

Very soon after the Chicago convention, it became clear to the country that the Republicans had named their strongest man. The fence rails that "Dick" Oglesby and old John Hanks had hauled in from the Sangamon

bottom and that had electrified the State convention at Decatur were now to make their appeal to the popular fancy.

"Mr. Lincoln's romantic personal history," wrote Horace Greeley in the *Tribune*, "his eloquence as an orator, and his firm personal integrity, give augury of a successful campaign — one of the 1840 stamp."

It proved to be far more unique and impressive than the "hard cider" campaign of 1840. The fence-rail was everywhere in evidence. It was carried aloft in parades; flaming banners fluttered from it at rallies; glee clubs sang its praises; campaign clubs called themselves "Rail Splitters" and "Rail Maulers"; and brawny-armed men mounted on huge wagons split rails as the procession moved along.

Quickly the story of Lincoln came out — the story which two years earlier he had declared "would interest no one" — the marvelous story of his meek and lowly birth, his struggles, his triumphs — and the world was amazed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The momentous events of the succeeding months — the eventful campaign of 1860, with the Democracy divided between Douglas at the North and Breckenridge at the South — the election of Lincoln in November and the gathering storm of secession — can not be narrated at length in this little volume. Responsibility weighed heavily upon the President-elect as he prepared for his departure for Washington.



PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND HIS CABINET.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### FAREWELL !

On a somber morning in February, 1861, Mr. Lincoln, accompanied by his family and others, took his leave for the national capital. Several hundred of his neighbors — men and women whom he had known almost a lifetime — gathered at the old Great Western station. Mr. Lincoln came out of the car and, standing on the rear platform, thus spoke with deep emotion :

" My Friends: No one not in my situation can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of these people I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I can not succeed. With that assistance, I can not fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commanding you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

The train rolled slowly away to the eastward. A little city in a western State was sending its first citizen to become the greatest President of the greatest republic of the world.











